



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to HOC Ashgabat, Ambassador Badescu

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Douglas A. Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 20, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We too, welcome Ambassador Badescu to the Permanent Council today and thank her for report. We very much appreciate and support her work and that of her fine team. We also support the projects that the Center has undertaken, and hope that this cooperation between the OSCE and the Government of Turkmenistan will continue to develop.

We believe the ongoing projects in legislative assistance, development of small and medium enterprises, law enforcement, and the role of women are a good basis on which to build and develop OSCE cooperation with Turkmenistan.

Nonetheless, we remain concerned about developments in the country. We hope that the Government of Turkmenistan will work together with the OSCE to address several issues; taking some steps now would be a sign that Turkmenistan wants to engage and build its relations with the OSCE.

First and foremost, we hope that Turkmen authorities will allow access to people in prison, in order to check on their health and conditions. We would also urge that family members not only be allowed access, but also allowed to bring food, medicine, and other necessary items with them. Internationally respected institutions, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), should also be invited to Turkmenistan and be given full access to prisoners.

In this connection, we repeat our request for information on the health and whereabouts of former OSCE Ambassador Batyr Berdiev and others arrested in connection with the November 25 attack.

We also continue to be concerned about detained civil society activist Farid Tukhbatullin, who has been convicted and sentenced to 3 years in prison. We again call on the Government of Turkmenistan to release him.

We also look to the Government of Turkmenistan to retract the re-imposition of an exit visa regime. Abolishing exit visas was one of the major steps towards reform that Turkmenistan had taken; re-imposing them is a major step backwards.

In closing Mr. Chairman, we would like again to stress that we want to engage Turkmenistan in the OSCE, and to work towards building democratic institutions, rule of law, respect for human rights, and a market economy in Turkmenistan.

We also hope that the Government of Turkmenistan will reach out and take steps such as allowing access to prisoners and abolishing exit visas and will begin a new era of cooperation with the OSCE.

Thank you.